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Peer Review on Homelessness Policies in Barcelona, Spain

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PEER REVIEW on Homelessness Policies in Barcelona

Discussion Paper

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1. Introduction

This paper reviews homelessness policies in the city of Barcelona, Spain, in the context of wider European developments and potential comparisons with other European cities. This is the seventh in a series of peer reviews of city homelessness policies in Europe, mediated through the HABITACT European Exchange Forum on local homelessness strategies. The city of Barcelona presents a valuable case study in regard to continuous monitoring of the extent and the profile of homelessness in a big city in Southern Europe and by moving from a staircase system of service provision for homeless people towards implementing a Housing First approach under difficult structural conditions.

The discussion paper begins by setting the context of responses to homelessness and social exclusion at the European level. It then examines homelessness in relation to the Spanish national context, before providing an overview of key elements of homelessness policies in the City of Barcelona. The detailed case study of homelessness policy in Barcelona is then compared with the wider research evidence base across other European countries in order to identify potential for transferability of elements of the Barcelona approach to other local contexts. The discussion paper concludes by formulating key questions about the Barcelona approach for consideration in the peer review meeting.

2. EU Context: Reducing Homelessness, Promoting Prevention and Social Inclusion

The work of the European Commission and its Directorate General for Employment & Social Affairs, the main EU structure responsible for addressing homelessness, is generally underpinned and guided by the anti-poverty targets contained within Europe 2020 Strategy. The 2020 Strategy commits the EU to raising 20 million people out of poverty by 2020. EU activities and initiatives on homelessness are generally advocated through soft policy measures, as the EU institutions do not derive a competency for introducing "hard law" on homelessness from the treaties. Examples of such soft policy options are detailed below.

The Europe 2020 Strategy was agreed with politically and legally binding targets to be achieved by 2020 (including poverty reduction), with the European Commission publishing EU policy guidance on confronting homelessness in its Social Investment Package (EC, 2013). Most significantly, the Commission calls on Member States to confront homelessness through comprehensive strategies based on prevention, housing-led approaches and reviewing regulations and practices on eviction, taking into account the key findings of the guidance on confronting homelessness provided in the Package.

The European Semester is a process which the European Commission uses to monitor and coordinate economic policies in the member states. This a policy process developed as a response to ensure greater economic coordination and prevent fiscal harm following the economic crisis. The European Commission, while liaising with the member states and civil society, assesses the economic performance of the member states on an annual basis, through Country Reports (CRs) and responds with the publication of a series of Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs). These CSRs cover issues of national debt, employment, education and poverty. In the past CRs have been used to identify risks of a housing bubble, yearly trends in house prices, reducing volatility, and fostering rental markets and have specifically raised the issue of homelessness (in 2016 this related to Spain, Ireland, Denmark and Malta).

The EU also recently launched an Urban Agenda which is being led by the member states. The agenda is divided into a series of policy streams, most relevant in this context are the urban poverty and housing streams. In 2016 a group of Mayors of Capital Cities in the EU specifically called for homelessness to be addressed within the Urban Agenda. The European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) is an observer to the urban poverty policy stream. This is a policy area which is in early development, at the drafting stage of this discussion paper a policy paper was being developed to set out policy goals in the coming years for the agenda. While the exact parameters of the Urban Agenda are unknown it is potentially a valuable policy instrument considering its focus on the local level and the partnerships and active involvement of cities. The work on the EU Urban Agenda follows previous work in urban development in a wide variety of areas, including the European regional and urban development policy which is supported by funding programmes like the URBACT programme.

The European Commission is currently in the early stages of developing an EU Pillar of Social Rights. This is an attempt by the Commission to offer all EU citizens a basic set of social rights. To date the European Commission has published a draft preliminary outline, which is currently open for public consultation. The current draft includes a right to shelter and housing. While it is likely to be some time before the pillar is finalised by the Commission, the potential of recognising the basic right to housing and shelter in the EU will have a positive impact in empowering cities and local organisations in the fight against homelessness.

While the immediate responsibility for homelessness lies with EU Member States, as recently as January 2014, Members of European Parliament called for a European strategy on homelessness focusing on housing, cross-border homelessness, quality of service provision and homelessness prevention (EP, 2014). The EU Committee of the Regions reiterated this call end of June 2014 (CoR, 2014).

Various EU funds also exist to support programmes locally. The European Social Fund (ESF) 2014-2020 regulation now also makes reference to homelessness, potentially opening up funding opportunities for homelessness organisations during 2014-2020 (HABITACT, 2014a). Further, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) 2014-2020 can be used to finance housing, social and health infrastructure which promote community-based action to support social inclusion, as well as investments in 'physical, economic and social regeneration of deprived communities'. A regulation for the Fund for European Aid to the most Deprived (FEAD) for the period 2014-2020 was formally adopted in March 2014, allowing national authorities to decide on priorities for FEAD operational programmes. The FEAD is potentially useful for emergency interventions tackling homelessness, such as starter packs to help people move out of homelessness and into accommodation.

The EU programme for Employment and Social Innovation 2014-2020 (EaSI), supports Member States' efforts in the design and implementation of employment and social reforms at European, national, regional and local levels by means of policy coordination and the identification, analysis and sharing of best practices. EaSI integrates and extends the coverage of three existing programmes: Progress (Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity); EURES (European Employment Services); and the European Progress Microfinance Facility. The EaSI programme should provide further support for research and innovation in the field of homelessness (as has been done in the past with projects like MPHASIS, Hope in Stations and Housing First Europe).

In the field of research and information about homelessness and housing exclusion at European level the most recent developments are the following: On behalf of the European Commission a pan-European study on tenancy rights (TENLAW) was finalised in 2015; and a report entitled "Pilot project - Promoting protection of the right to housing - Homelessness prevention in the context of evictions", based on a study conducted in 2014-2015, was published in May 2016.[1] In 2016 a European Peer Review was conducted on the Housing First Belgium programme.[2] Further new initia-

[1] http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=7892&type=2&furtherPubs=yes

[2] http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=89&langId=en&newsId=2338&furtherNews=yes, see also Busch-Geertsema (2016a and b)

tives include joint action with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) with a view to building a comprehensive housing database and analysis of social policies for affordable housing and housing exclusion. An EU SILC data module on retrospective homelessness episodes is expected to be tested by 2018.

3. Homelessness in Spain

3.1. Definition and measurement of homelessness in Spain

As reported in previous peer review discussion papers, FEANTSA's ETHOS (European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion) identifies 13 operational categories of homelessness across four core categories of rooflessness, houselessness, insecure housing and inadequate housing (Edgar and Meert, 2005; Edgar, 2009) and services directed at improving people's housing circumstances could prove valuable in all situations (see ETHOS in Annex). In ETHOS homelessness is conceptualised as exclusion from at least two of the three domains of housing: the physical, social and legal domain.

While we can identify an increasing use of ETHOS not only in Europe but across the world, we also have to acknowledge a significant variety of inclusion or exclusion of specific ETHOS subcategories in national definitions of homelessness (see Busch-Geertsema et al, 2014). Generally in the North of Europe we often find broader definitions of homelessness including for example people living in temporary / non conventional structures (mobile homes, non conventional buildings, makeshift shelters etc.) and those sharing temporarily with friends or family in order to prevent them from sleeping rough or in temporary accommodation for homeless people. In the South of Europe we often find a somewhat more narrow focus on homeless people sleeping rough or making use of accommodation for homeless people.

The Spanish welfare state is often categorised as a typical example of the Mediterranean welfare regime. This type of welfare regime is characterised by the central role of the family in providing protection of dependents against typical risks (like unemployment, illness or old age). To protect family members from homelessness is therefore seen as a family duty and those seeking informal support by family members in case of loss of their home are not classified as homeless. It is obvious that those persons who cannot rely on family support are hit hardest in such a system.

In Spain there is no clear consensus on how to define homelessness and data about homelessness available on the national level are scarce. In the recent Spanish Homelessness Strategy (Estrategia National Integral Para Personas Sin Hogar, short ENI-PSH, 2015, see below) reference is made to ETHOS and it is recommended to focus on those subgroups defined as roofless and houseless (operational categories 1-7 of ETHOS). Most of the data analysis of the National strategy is based on two national surveys conducted by the Spanish National Institute of Statistics (INE), conducted in 2005 and 2012 and some night counts in a number of cities (like Madrid, Zaragoza and Barcelona) and regions (especially the Basque region). Further below we will describe the rather well developed monitoring system in Barcelona in more depth.

The two INE surveys, following an approach first implemented in France, are based on a sampling procedure lasting six weeks (in 2012 from 13 February to 25 March) in care facilities, soup kitchens, hygiene services and night accommodation services in towns of more than 20,000 inhabitants. In this survey "a person is considered homeless when he/she is older than 18 and, in the

week before the survey, has used some care facility or accommodation service and/or food service, and has slept at least once in any of the following support services (..): a hostel, shelter or residence; a women's refuge for victims of sexual violence; a centre for refugee or asylum seekers; a flat provided by a public body, NGO or other organization; an occupied flat; a hostel or hotel paid for a public body; a public space (train, underground or bus station, parking area, public garden, parking lot...); or a nonconventional dwelling (the hall of a property, a cave, a car...). (Sales, 2015: 218)

Critiques of the national survey emphasise that it only covers those people in contact with specialised services and underestimates those who do not engage with services, a problem which exists in many data surveys on homelessness across Europe. As municipalities with less than 20,000 inhabitants are not covered at all, homelessness in rural areas and smaller towns/villages is ignored completely by the INE survey. It has also been argued that the relatively small quantitative development between 2005, when 21,900 homeless people were calculated at national level, and 2012 when the numbers had risen by only 4.7 per cent to 22,938 does not reflect the changes caused by the severe economic crisis and documented in several city counts. Even more so, when taken into consideration that the numbers of rough sleepers found in the national survey had decreased from 4,924 (2005) to 3,537 (2012), while counts in Zaragoza, Madrid and Barcelona showed increases between 22 and 38 per cent for different periods until 2013 (Sales, 2015; ENI-PSA, 2015: 12).

As can be seen from the comparison of places where people sampled in the two INE surveys had spent their nights in the week before they were interviewed, it is indeed also remarkable that the number of homeless people in women's refuges has diminished drastically from 666 (2005) to 103 (2012) and those in centres for asylum seekers from 618 (2005) to only 44 (2012; see table 1).

On the other hand those who made use of different kinds of temporary accommodation (shelter, hostel, flats) provided by an NGO or other organisation had increased substantially from 10,632 (2005) to 14,681 (2012). Albert Sales (2015: 219), in his critical account of Spanish data on homelessness, points to the fact that this increase reflects the growing demand on local social services and NGOs to react to pressing demands of homeless people within budget limitations and political restrictions: "In other words, it is the growth capacity of night-accommodation places that is being measured and not the increasing need".

However, no other empirical national data on homelessness are currently available in Spain. As part of the Spanish national homelessness strategy an attempt has been made to estimate the total number of homeless people on basis of some of the city counts, data from INE and taking into account "hidden homelessness" of people not covered by the surveys. This estimate results in a range of 27,500 – 33,000 homeless persons during one night at national level, but it is also emphasised that this estimate has to be taken with precaution, as it is based on a number of assumptions (see ENI-PSH, 2015: 12).

Table 1: Accommodation of homeless people in the week before INE survey, 2005/2012

Type of accommodation	2005	2012
Shelter or residence for homeless people	8,454	9,915
Women's refuges (for victims of domestic violence)	666	103
Centres for asylum seekers and refugees	618	44
Flat provided by NGO or other organisation	1,862	3,537
Squatted flat	1.765	1,738
Hostel/hotel paid for by NGO or other organisation	316	1,239
Public area	4,924	3,419
Non-conventional dwelling	3,294	2,943
Total	**21,900**	**22,938**

Source: INE survey of homeless people, 2005 and 2012, adapted from Sales (2015): 219

3.2. The Spanish homelessness strategy and some analysis of national data on homelessness

In 2015 the Spanish Cabinet adopted an "Integrated National Strategy for Homeless Persons 2015 -2020" (ENI-PSH, 2015). Almost half of the Strategy paper is dedicated to an analysis of national data on the extent and profile of homelessness. Most of the analysis is based on a comparison of the two national INE-surveys mentioned above. They show an increase of younger people between 18 and 29, but the number of people older than 45 has risen even more, so that the mean age of homeless persons increased from 37 years in 2005 to 43 years in 2012. INE data also show an increase of homeless women (from 17.3 % to 19.6 % of all homeless persons covered). Especially among younger homeless people between 18 and 29 the proportion of women rose from 18 per cent in 2005 to 25 per cent in 2012 (ENI-PSH, 2015: 12-13).

Compared with other EU countries the proportion of homeless people with foreign nationality is remarkably high in Spain, but decreased from 48.2 per cent in 2005 to 45.8 per cent in 2012 according to the two INE surveys. Among this group the proportion from outside the European Union had increased substantially to 36 % of all homeless people covered, mainly due to an increase of people from Africa. An increase of homeless persons with a partner and children was observed mainly among homeless men coming from outside the European Union. In 2012 almost half of homeless persons covered by the INE survey had a partner and children (see ENI-PSH, 2015: 14 and 21).

In the 2012 survey 45 per cent of the homeless persons interviewed stated unemployment as the principal reason for losing their last permanent housing, the second most stated reason (mentioned by 26 %) was inability to continue paying for the housing costs and the third (mentioned by 20.9 %) was separation from partner. Compared with causes stated in 2005 there was a strong increase (by 58 %) of those not being able to cover their housing costs, but also of those who accounted their homelessness to loss of housing (increase by 38 %) or the loss of their

job (increase by 35 %, see ENI-PSA, 2015: 14-15).

It is well known that point in time or "snapshot" surveys underestimate the proportion of short-term homelessness. Nevertheless it is noteworthy that the proportion of homeless people who had been in this situation for less than six months had diminished between the two national surveys from 30.1 per cent (2005) to 19.9 per cent (2012), while the increase of all other categories of duration was interpreted as indicating a "chronification" of homelessness in the national Strategy (ENI-PSA, 2015: 15).

Regarding the self-reported use of alcohol and drugs a greater proportion of interviewees in 2012 than in 2005 stated that they never drink (56 % compared to 41.5 % in 2005) or take drugs (62.7 % compared to 57.6 % in 2005) and in 2012 only 5.1 per cent of all men and very few women (0.3 %) stated that they had a high or excessive use of alcohol[3]. No data on mortality and morbidity are available for homeless people in Spain, so this is one of the very few parts of the analytical part of the National Strategy when reference to studies in other countries (in Europe, the US and Canada) is made.

The "diagnosis" part of the Strategy also finds increasing similarities between the homeless sample in 2012 and the "integrated" majority of the population, pointing to an increase of homeless people with university education (9,9 % of homeless women and 12.3 % of homeless men in 2012 had studied at some university) and a greater proportion of qualified people still working while being homeless. It concludes that more people have lost their homes due to the economic crisis. They could no longer pay the costs of their rent or mortgage due to unemployment, salary reductions or a separation, and experienced a strong social downwards mobility from a family home and employment to being homeless (ENI-PSA, 2015: 22-23).

The two national surveys also show an increase of homeless people being victims of aggressions or crimes. More than six out of ten homeless people (61.8 %) reported in 2012 that they had been robbed (compared with 40.3 % in 2005) and almost two thirds (65.4 %) had experienced aggressive attacks or threats (compared with 41.9 % in 2005). Sexual aggressions against homeless women had doubled (from 12.8 % in 2005 to 24.2 % in 2012).

After the extensive "diagnosis" part, which also includes information about the distribution of different types of accommodation, the provision of services and their geographical distribution, contacts of homeless people with their family of origin and many more details, the basic principles, objectives and "strategic lines" of the National Strategy are presented (ENI-PSA, 2015: 27 ff.).

Seven principles are formulated as the focus of the strategy:

- a rights based approach
- unity of action
- prevention and early intervention
- a housing led approach

[3] See orignal data under http://www.ine.es/dyngs/INEbase/es/operacion.htm?

- a person-centred approach
- a gendered perspective
- improvement of knowledge and evidence based staff education and training

The national Strategy is based on five general strategic objectives:

- the prevention of homelessness
- awareness- raising and protection against discrimination and hate-attacks against homeless people
- guaranteeing safety of homeless people
- restoring life projects
- strengthening public services and improvement of information and evaluation

Among the more concrete measures recommended by the Strategy are prevention services with capacities for providing financial and juridical support in a situation of housing crisis, mediation of family conflicts and provision of alternative housing in cases when the current housing cannot be secured. Early intervention protocols are recommended for a range of different situations like entry into and release from institutions (such as prisons and psychiatric hospitals, youth welfare institutions etc.), divorce, domestic violence and other situations closely connected with the imminent risk of becoming homeless. Among the "housing led" policy measures facilitating access of homeless people to public and private housing and a "flexible and diverse mix of accommodation" are mentioned, but it remains unclear, how these aims should be accomplished. The implementation of the Housing First model is also suggested. Furthermore case-management is recommended to facilitate a more personalised approach.

A number of further measures are suggested in the National Strategy in order to improve and strengthen existing services, increase the employability of homeless persons, foster their participation, reduce discrimination and negative images and improve the knowledge and information exchange about homelessness and examples of good practices.

The National Strategy also proposes a large number of specific targets for the reduction of homelessness until 2020 with intermediate targets for 2018. The objectives for 2020 (using the INE data as a basis) are

- a reduction of homelessness at national level by approximately 5,000 (from almost 23,000 in 2015 to 18,000 in 2020)
- a reduction of homeless women by more than half (from 4,513 in 2015 to 2,044 in 2020)
- a substantial reduction of the proportion of young homeless people aged 18-29 (from 19 % to 8 %)
- a reduction of the proportion of elderly homeless people over 64 (from 3.8 % to 1.5 %)
- a reduction of the proportion of homeless people sleeping rough, in non-conventional dwellings and squatted housing (from 35 % to 15 %)
- a reduction of the proportion of homeless people with severe illness (from 31 % to 15 %)

- a reduction of the proportion of homeless persons with addictions (from 37 % to 25 %)

Furthermore quantitative indicators for measuring progress regarding the different objectives and strategic measures are provided. An evaluation of the results is foreseen as part of an interim report in 2019 and a final one in 2021.

Certainly many of the objectives of the national strategy are to be welcomed, especially the target to reduce homelessness in Spain and to do this by strengthening prevention, by using a housing led approach, implementing Housing First projects and the personalization of support (using a case manager approach). However, only one paragraph of the whole strategy is dedicated to the question who will provide the necessary funding and this paragraph provides a very vague answer emphasising the shared responsibility of national, regional and local government. As others have criticized before "the potential strengths [of the measures proposed by the strategy] may not materialise in practice, due to the lack of a dedicated budget for implementation and, as stated by the Spanish Federation of Organisations Supporting Homeless People, to the lack of additional budget for issues related to prevention, social innovation, research and on-going evaluation." (Cabrero and Gallego, 2016: 2). The massive lack of affordable rented housing in Spain for those who cannot afford to buy has been neglected to a large extent in the analysis of the strategy. Concrete and targeted actions to improve access to housing for those in need do not only require the involvement of those parts of the administration responsible for housing issues, but also targeted investment and the necessary resources. Resources would also be needed to enable unemployed people to sustain their tenancies financially over a longer period if financial support from their families is not available.

It will be a particular challenge to implement the strategy in a highly decentralised government structure. National government in Spain has devolved social protection competences to the Communities. The Public System of Social Services is responsible for implementing homelessness policies at the regional and local level. Services are coordinated and co-financed by the responsible national Ministry and NGO services play a major role in delivering the services. Shared responsibilities between national government, the Autonomous Communities and the municipalities also apply for housing policies in Spain (see Aldanas, 2013).

For a much more comprehensive analysis of the Spanish Homelessness Strategy see Baptista (2016).

4. The Approach in Barcelona: Recurrent Measurement, Turning Away from the Staircase Approach and Testing Housing First

4.1. The local context

With a population of 1.6 million inhabitants, Barcelona City is the second largest city in Spain (after Madrid with slightly more than 3.2 million inhabitants) and the capital of the autonomous region Catalonia. 16.6 per cent of the population of Barcelona are immigrants with a foreign nationality. 14.1 per cent were unemployed (data for 2015).

In contrast to the generally very low proportion of rented housing in Spain (13.5 %) almost a third of the housing stock (206,000 of overall 684,000 housing units) in Barcelona is rented,[4] but only a very low number of rent-controlled properties (10,000 units, constituting 1.25 % of the total stock) are available. Barcelona is among the Spanish cities with the highest prices for purchase of housing.

The last survey on homelessness in Barcelona showed a total of 2,799 people being homeless on March 11th 2015 (0.18 % of the total population). Of these an estimated 693 persons slept rough, 252 in a night shelter, 511 were living in hostels or in accommodation for homeless people and 481 in a continued support accommodation for homeless people. 434 persons were living in temporary, non-conventional structures and 424 were living in insecure tenancy housing. Data for other ETHOS categories were not included except a very low number of 4 persons in women`s shelter accommodation (see XAPSLL, 2015: 20).

4.2 Developing a solid and recurrent database on homelessness

In 2008 a first street count was conducted in the night of March 11th in Barcelona. With the help of a large number of volunteers walking through the city on the same night and counting all the people who were sleeping in public areas or rough, 658 street homeless people were found. This was 17 per cent more than the 562 rough sleepers estimated by the Social Insertion Service (SIS), based on their monthly reports of registered people they were in contact with on the street throughout the month. Rough sleeper numbers were combined with numbers of people registered at the same time in different types of shelters and temporary accommodation provided by members of XAPSLL (Xarxa d'Atenció a Persones Sense Lar, the Network of Attention to Homeless People)[5] and with data on people in "settlements" (extremely inadequate housing). The data recorded include "roofless people: people who sleep on the street or collective facilities specialised in night attention; houseless people: people who live in residential centres or

[4] Data are from the last Population and Housing Census 2011

[5] In 2016 the XAPSLL network had 26 members, most of them NGOs, but also including the city administration of Barcelona. See http://www.bcn.cat/sensellar/es/xquees.php.html

insertion flats of the network; people in situations of insecure housing who are supported by an institution or organisation which pays the hostel or room rent to prevent them from sleeping in the street and people who live in settlements placed in open areas, industrial units or inadequate structures" (XAPSLL, 2015: 19).

In March 2008 the total number of homeless people covered by this definition was 2,113 (658 rough sleepers covered by the street count, 1,190 persons accommodated by the network and 265 people living in settlements).

In the night of 8th November 2011 a second large street count was undertaken with more than 700 volunteers. They counted 838 people sleeping rough, which was 15 per cent more than the 726 rough sleepers estimated by the SIS, based on their monthly records. It also showed a 27 % increase of rough sleepers since 2008. The total number of homeless people had increased to 2,791.

In the following years no new street counts were conducted, but for March 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015 data were combined following the same classifications as in 2008 and 2011. As can be seen from Table 2 there was a substantial increase of homelessness between 2008 and 2012 when a peak of 3,126 homeless people was reached. After 2012 numbers slightly decreased to 2,799 in 2015.

Table 2: Number of homeless people in the city of Barcelona, 2008, 2011, 2013, 2014 and 2015

	2008		2011		2012	2013	2014	2015
	According to count in night of March 11th	According to SIS estimations	According to count in night of Nov. 8th	According to SIS estimations	According to SIS estimations	According to SIS estimations	According to SIS estimations	According to SIS estimations
People sleeping rough	658	562	838	726	731	870	715	693
People in settlements (according to SIS reports)	265	265	695	695	834	595	423	434
People housed in XAPSLL's accommodation for homeless people	1,190	1,190	1,258	1,258	1,561	1,451	1,562	1,672
Total homeless people	**2,113**	**2,017**	**2,791**	**2,697**	**3,126**	**2,916**	**2,700**	**2,799**
Sources: Counts made by XAPSLL. SIS registers and reports								

Source: XAPSLL (2015): 21 and 20

In May 2015 an additional street count conducted by one member organisation of XAPSLL (Arrels Foundation) again showed a higher number of rough sleepers (892 instead of the 702 registered by SIS in March of the same year, which was 25.8 % more).

Despite the differences detected between street counts and the registers of the Social Insertion Services of Barcelona City Council it should be kept in mind that in relation to the total number of homeless people counted every year these differences are less remarkable (190 more rough sleepers would increase the total number of homeless people calculated in 2015 by 6.8 %). Given the enormous efforts needed to conduct a street count and to organise hundreds of volunteers it seems rational to do this less frequently and to add a certain "error factor" to the numbers derived on basis of the register information. While the XAPSLL report notes that the data based on SIS registers only count those people who have been identified by SIS professionals as sleeping on the street on an on-going basis and with whom there has been some contact ("short-term rough sleepers or people who change their living quarters daily will be rarely considered in these statistics" XAPSLL, 2015: 22), street counts might just as well also include their own error factors as do numerations on the basis of registered contacts: some rough sleepers might have been counted more than once and some might not have been found in that particular night of the count.[6]

This report is based on the most recently available published material about the street counts. But it should be noted that in May 2016 another street count was conducted with more than 800 volunteers and according to reports in the press[7] the number of rough sleepers found was 941, which would be the highest number counted so far in Barcelona in any street count.

The different reports of XAPSLL frequently mention another problem found in many attempts to quantify homelessness at local as well as national level. To a certain extent homeless numbers always also reflect changes in service provision. If there are new services for homeless people not covered by the definition used and therefore not included in the count, "real" numbers might be underestimated, while on the other hand it will always be difficult to cover those homeless people not making use of homelessness services, especially if the capacity of services does not cover the existing need. As the authors of the most recent report rightly point out, "providing new resources not only depends on the demand, but also on the local organizations and institutions' capacity, the facilities' availability and the state and private XAPSLL agents' capacity to rent or purchase housing in the real estate market" (XAPSLL, 2015: 20).

An example for a new service, not covered by the counts conducted, is a Cáritas program (OIKOS) which has housed 208 families (790 people) during 2015 in housing units in the city of Barcelona: "These people didn't access the program when a street situation was detected, rather as a result of situations of overcrowding (27% of housing units), evictions and foreclosures (34%), bad dwelling conditions (18%) or release from an institution without any housing option (22%)." (XAPSLL, 2015: 21) The authors of the XAPSLL report argue that without the existence of

[6] It might be of interest to know that in the US, e.g. in New York, so called "decoys" (fake rough sleepers) are used to correct possible undercoverage of homeless people in street counts.

[7] See http://www.publico.es/sociedad/barcelona-000-personas-hogar-y.html

the OIKOS program at least some of the 790 people covered by it might have become homeless, but that it was impossible to provide an exact number. This is even more true as the total number is an annual number and the Caritas program was directed at least in part on people who were not homeless, but inadequately housed.

Nevertheless and despite of some of the shortcomings revealed above, "it is fair to say that Barcelona is the city of Spain with the most solid data on the extent of homelessness among the population", as the 2015 XAPSLL report puts it (p. 67).

As can be seen in table 3 the data registered cover operational categories 1,2,3,4,7,8 and 9 of the operational categories listed in ETHOS. On the one hand some of the situations included in the total number are classified under ETHOS under the sections of insecure and inadequate housing, indicating wider phenomena of housing exclusion than homelessness and others classified by ETHOS under the conceptual category of houselessness are not covered by the count (people in temporary accommodation for immigrants and asylum seekers and those living in institutions and who are soon to be released with a home to go to).

A closer look shows that these two groups of houseless people with missing data are often ignored by homelessness statistics in other EU countries as well. Especially for those who are soon to be released from institutions some questions have been raised in a recent debate about ETHOS, whether they should actually be counted as homeless before they have left the institutions (see Amore, 2011). Special accommodation for immigrants and asylum seekers is often administered under a different administration. As we have seen above for national data and will see further below for the data on the profile of homeless people in Barcelona, even without including data on this type of accommodation, the proportion of foreigners among homeless persons is exceptionally high, compared to other EU countries and cities.

On the other hand subgroups 8 (those living in insecure tenancy housing without paying rent) and 11 are groups that are also included in homeless counts in a number of other EU countries, and at least group 11 (those who sleep in temporary and non-conventional structures, like mobile homes, make shift shelters, shacks, huts etc.) is often also subsumed as a part of people sleeping rough (see Busch-Geertsema et al., 2014: 23).

All in all, regarding the numbers of homeless people (those without a roof or without any long-term housing) the data base appears pretty complete in Barcelona, although numbers of women in refuges for victims of gendered violence appear to reflect only a very small proportion of those affected.

The available data also show that numbers of homeless people living in hostels and other types of temporary accommodation for homeless people have been growing over the years, which is perhaps one reason, why, after the increase of rough sleepers until 2013 the extent of this most extreme form of housing exclusion has slightly decreased. However, given that Barcelona city

[8] The campaign was initiated during FEANTSA's European campaign "Ending Homelessness" in 2010, resulting in the EU Parliament's decision to call for an EU strategy to end street homeless by 2015 (among other objectives), released on December 16th 2010.

and the XAPSLL network has run a campaign since 2010 under the slogan "Imagine in 2015 nobody sleeping on the street"[8], these results are still disappointing: "Although the city's range of services has kept broadening in terms of resources and residential places, the slim possibility of ending 2015 without people being obliged to sleep on the street is still impossible to see." (XAPSLL, 2015: 9)

Table 3: Number of homeless people in the city of Barcelona, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015 differentiated by ETHOS classification

		Number of people				
Conceptional category	Operational category	November 8th 2011	March 11th 2012	March 11th 2013	March 11th 2014	March 11th 2015
Roofless-ness	1. Living rough or in a public space	726	731	870	715	693
	2. Sleeping in a night shelter and/or forced to spend the day in a public space	197	230	259	304	252
Homeless-ness	3. Living in hostels or accommodation for homeless people. Temporary accommodation	320	281	333	407	511
	4. Living in women's shelter accommodation	No data	20	4	13	4
	5. Living in temporary accommodation for immigrants and asylum seekers	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
	6. Living in institutions and soon being released without a home to go to	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
	7. Living in a continued supported accommodation for homeless people	342	332	356	486	481
Insecure housing	8. Living in insecure tenancy housing without paying rent	399	698	499	352	424
	9. Living under threat of eviction	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
	10. Living under threat of family's or partner's violence	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
Inadequate housing	11. Living in temporary / non-conventional structures	695	834	595	423	434
	12. Living in unfit housing according to legislation	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
	13. Living in overcrowded housing	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
Total		**2,679**	**3,126**	**2,916**	**2,700**	**2,799**
Sources: Counts made by XAPSLL. SIS registers and reports						
Note: Data from ETHOS categories 1 and 11 are provided by observations made by SIS. This data doesn't belong to the citizen count on 11th March, but to the identification of different people on the streets of Barcelona through March.						

Source: XAPSLL (2015): 21 and 20

The data-base of Barcelona city and the XAPSLL-network also provides some basic information about the profile of different subgroups of homeless people.

We can learn that the proportion of rough sleepers with a foreign citizenship has increased from 61 per cent in 2012 to 68 per cent in 2015, which means that recently more than two

third of all rough sleepers in Barcelona were not Spanish citizens. In the same period the proportion of those rough sleepers with a (non Spanish) EU passport has increased from 33 % in 2012 to 38% in 2015. In contrast substantially fewer foreigners sleeping on the streets were in an irregular legal situation in 2015 (47%) than in 2012 (62%). Looking at the nationality of people accommodated by support services the proportion of homeless people with Spanish nationality had increased between March 2009 and March 2011 (from 38.3% to 52.8%), but decreased after 2011 to only 41.6 per cent in March 2015, so that the proportion of non-nationals was very similar as among rough sleepers, but only 10.9 per cent of accommodated homeless people had another EU nationality and almost half (47.5%) were non-EU citizens in March 2015. 19.6 per cent of homeless people accommodated by support services had an irregular status in 2015.

Similarly as in the national survey the average age of rough sleepers had increased in Barcelona (from 42 years in 2012 to 45 in 2015). Little more than 9 per cent of all people accommodated in homeless facilities were over 65 in Barcelona; their proportion among rough sleepers was considerably lower. The age distribution is influenced by the fact that 13.9 per cent of those accommodated in homeless facilities are minors aged under 18, while no rough sleepers of this age group were found. It is remarkable, however, that more than a fourth of all rough sleepers (26%) were aged between 51 and 65 (22% of those accommodated in homeless facilities; XAPSLL, 2015: 24)

In regard to gender the data collected in the annual surveys inform us that proportions between men and women on the street remained fairly stable over the years: only 10.7 per cent of rough sleepers were women, 89.3 per cent were men. The proportion of women in accommodation for homeless people was higher (21.8%) and 13.8 % of those accommodated were minors, while the proportion of men was 64.4 per cent, remaining relatively stable over the years. Some interesting remarks are made in the latest report of XAPSLL, containing a separate chapter on "female homelessness" (XAPSLL, 2015: 55 ff.). The report states, referring to the data available "the proportion of women is higher as we move away from street or roofless situations. If the proportion of women on the street is 11% and 14% in the homeless shelters, when we look at medium and long-term or residential services, a figure of 20% is observed; 23% are women in insertion flats and 31% are women in pensions or rented rooms subsidized by an organization or local social services. Women in a homelessness situation therefore have a higher capacity or need to seek support than men do." (XAPSLL 2015: 56).

The report points to different pathways of women into homelessness and on worse health conditions of those ending up in homeless facilities and concludes – somewhat speculatively: "Indeed it's in the most hidden categories of housing exclusion, those for which we lack qualitative and quantitative information, where a greater number of females would be found, especially immigrant women. Those categories most linked to private scenarios; the secluded homelessness; those situations of housing insecurity which are not seen on the street and, in some cases, belonging to other categories different to "homeless", but distinctly affected by housing exclusion." (XAPSLL 2015: 56)

Obviously a number of open questions remain in this context. To what extent does a separate system of provision for victims of domestic violence in Barcelona exist, given that only 4 persons were counted in women's refuges in the XAPSLL count in 2015? To what extent is a lack of gender specific provision in the homeless service sector responsible for the low proportion of female users? What happens to families who are evicted from housing in Barcelona? Are children often taken in care in this situation and the parents separated or is a different kind of support available to prevent those families from having to make use of the homeless shelter system (as for example noted for the specific Caritas scheme above)? But also some positive discrimination mechanisms have to be mentioned. Are women, and especially mothers with children, more likely to be those who may remain in owner-occupied housing in cases of divorce or separation? Are there more efforts being taken to prevent mothers with children from becoming homeless? Obviously more research on the gender dimension of homelessness is needed, not only in Spain and Barcelona, but in many other EU Member States and on European Union level as well.

The XAPSLL report (2015) which is also available in English, includes some further data analysis concerning people with disability certificates among those accommodated by homeless services (8.5 % in 2015), people with dependency grade certifications (3.1 % in 2015), income sources of homeless people (10.9 % with some income from work, 51.9% with no income at all in 2015) and regarding the development of accommodation facilities.

While the number of places in flats used to accommodate homeless people has increased in recent years (481 homeless people were accommodated in flats in 2015 of a total of 1,672 people who are accommodated by homelessness services), homeless people accommodated in residential centres were still the largest category (767 in March 2015). In addition 169 people were accommodated in commercial guest rooms and 255 in rooms in shared apartments. However, the report emphasises that some 90 of the places occupied in "residential centres" 2015 were actually located in apartments of an accommodation centre for families allowing for more privacy and differing from the traditional shelter concept. The report goes on: "It's getting more and more accepted among professionals the fact that people are attended in the different accommodation services according to their situation, their moment and their opportunities. Although it's necessary to count on diverse services for the differing individual situations, this data invites us to break with the idea that the reconstruction process of personal autonomy has to be based on a staircase model that starts with a homeless shelter centre, then an insertion flat and ends with own housing" (XAPSLL, 2015:31). We will come back further below to this turn away from the traditional staircase model, which was followed for quite some time by the city of Barcelona.

In the XAPSLL report some more qualitative information is available on intervention policies in fighting against homelessness (2013 report) and – mainly based on interviews and group discussions with homeless people and people who have overcome homelessness successfully – three chapters in the 2015 report about "Trigger factors of homelessness persistence", "Successful pathways. Exiting homelessness" and "Female homelessness". The 2013 report mainly calls for better measures to prevent homelessness (caused by the loss of permanent housing but also by

release from institutions) and to develop strategies against homelessness at all levels quoting positive examples from across Europe.

4.3. Turning away from the staircase approach and testing Housing First

The 2015 report comes up with some severe critique of the dominating stereotypes about homeless people and the negative effects of the existing support system in Barcelona. Concerning the stereotypes the report concludes three key points: "*The first is that homelessness is not a social pathology; it's a problem of housing access. The second, that nobody sleeps on the street out of choice. The third, that homeless people don't need a roof to rebuild their life, but a home*" (XAPSLL, 2015: 68). From the interview quotations we can see some shortcomings of the support system in Barcelona. Waiting lists for shelter places have to be applied and if admitted the stay in shelters remains time-limited. People have to leave the shelters over the day, some of them are situated far outside the centre and in some many people have to share the same dormitory. Stays in so-called medium-term accommodation centres is limited to three months and at least some homeless people try to avoid the accommodation system altogether or are just rotating in a revolving door manner. The report concludes, "*that the reality of the processes of people attended has little to do with the goals targeted by the staircase model. The stagnation during years of some of the people in homeless shelters, moving from one homeless centre to another, sleeping rough for some time, the great diversity of exclusion paths and types of entrance into the assistance circuits, or the big difficulties in maintaining housing after leaving a centre or an insertion flat are only three of the realities that break the idealistic model of staircase transition*" (XAPSLL, 2015: 69). "*The design of a model based on the staircase model - in which people are expected to leave the street to go to a homeless shelter and from there to a mid-term accommodation centre and from there to an insertion flat to recover an autonomous life - should be revised.*" (ibid:68)

Furthermore the report is very clear about the structural causes of homelessness in Barcelona (and probably everywhere in Spain): "*Although obvious, we can't ignore the fact that homeless people have defined the key to overcoming housing exclusion as the provision of housing and the capacity to maintain it. At the bottom of it, this is surely the great obstacle: in Barcelona, there is a wealth of experience of homeless people's attention and there is a network that, working on the staircase transition model, is well provided and counts on qualified and highly motivated experts. But their work is decisively limited because people attended can't access sufficient income and affordable and stable housing. It is hence fundamental to develop, once and for all, a provision of social housing for homeless people. Housing policies must be connected to the attention towards those who suffer the worst forms of homelessness, because homelessness is not a social pathology, but a housing access problem. The scarce provision of social housing in Barcelona - only 2% of the total housing stock, when it would be recommendable to reach 15% - is an important obstacle in the effort to reduce all homelessness forms*" (XAPSLL, 2015: 70).

The support system for homeless people in Barcelona has been praised for quite some time as a good example of what EUROCITIES calls the "integrated chain approach", which is basically a staircase system plus non-accommodation services such as day centres, advice, street work etc.

(see EUROCITIES, 2012). But in recent years Barcelona has been at the forefront in Spain by experimenting with the Housing First approach, placing homeless people with severe support needs as quickly as possible in self-contained permanent housing with support provided as needed and according to the individuals` preferences.

By mid 2015 the support system for homeless people in Barcelona funded wholly or partially by the city consisted of 14 accommodation centres with 791 places providing shelter for (mainly) single persons and families. The different centres were categorized into four different types of facilities: "sheltered" (255 places in three centres), "basic care" (75 places in two centres), "insertion" (161 places in four centres plus 100 places in hotels and hostels) and "accommodation centres" (3 centres with 200 places).

In addition 50 so called inclusion flats provided temporary accommodation with support for 221 persons allowing for longer stays. From a national test of Housing First implemented and evaluated by RAIS (an NGO based in Madrid) ten homeless people were housed in permanent housing in Barcelona and in a new scheme, funded by Barcelona City Government and implemented by two NGOs between June 2015 and June 2016 an additional Housing First pilot was planned with 50 flats.

Altogether there were slightly more than 1,000 places with municipal funding available for providing temporary accommodation of diverse quality and space for privacy, different lengths of stay, different intensity of support and different target groups, plus 60 flats for permanent housing of formerly homeless people in Housing First. As we can see from the data reported earlier a considerable number of accommodation facilities have to be added which do not receive municipal funding.

Furthermore there were 6 day centres (with 275 places, most of them attached to shelters), 4 hygiene services where homeless people can take a shower and wash their clothes (140 places) and 17 social canteens (1,547 places).

While there are teams of municipal personnel working as street workers (the SIS team mentioned above, with 42 professionals in 2014) and another team called "SIS Treatment" (with five professionals in 2014)[9], most of the accommodation services are outsourced to NGOs and private providers.

In recent years the municipality has been keen to modernise the support system for homeless people by providing more individualised places, by promoting the inclusion flats and more recently by testing Housing First. The municipal system has been characterized as an individualised, pro-active approach, using outreach and community work, working with each individual based on a personalised support plan (and a single file per person) and in coordination with municipal services (such as courts, local police, health services etc.). Multiple gateways are provided to use homelessness services, different management models are used and the municipali-

[9] Numbers provided by Uribe (2015): 11.

ty is eager to spread resources throughout the city. Being based on the basic principle of a "staircase of transition" (leading from the street to first contacts with social services over short term accommodation, medium term accommodation to an inclusion flat to the final goal of living independently without further support; see Uribe, 2015: 12) and being "far from giving an answer to all homeless people" the Barcelona homelessness service system has been praised as being "the most developed support system of municipalities in Catalonia, one of the most significant across the Spanish state and very important at European level." (Uribe, 2015: 15, our translations). While the system is reported to work for a considerable part of homeless people it has been criticized for some shortcomings reported for staircase systems all over the world: The bottleneck at the upper end of the system (to find permanent housing for those who have progressed), the revolving door effect for people who should have progressed and were left behind at certain stages and the inability to effectively support people who have become "chronic" and long-term homeless who have "failed" to climb the system and keep being marginalised. Uribe (2015: 15) estimates that they make up up to 40 per cent of rough sleepers, although it is difficult to provide any exact assessment.

Up to now Housing First has been implemented in order to test it and to add a new part to the existing menu of services, targeted especially at a group of homeless people in a chronic situation who have not managed to profit from existing service provision. After some country visits, the perception of the existing literature about successful implementation of Housing First in the US, in Canada and a number of European cities (see further below), a first collaboration agreement was sought with RAIS for ten apartments in Barcelona in 2014[10]. In the same year the municipal project of managing 50 additional homes with the Housing First approach was developed and in 2015 it was tendered to NGOs. The plan was to implement the whole scheme gradually until June 2016 and to complete the pilot by May 2018 with an option for extension until December 2018.

The municipal plan for the Housing First pilot in Barcelona looks promising and follows the Housing First principles in many respects. Permanent and individual housing should be provided throughout Barcelona (the homes should not be shared and house one person or a maximum of two functioning as a couple or in a positive friendship) and users should be selected among those homeless people with an extensive background of living on the street or in accommodation centres for at least one year with mental disorder and/or addictions (further requirements were that they should be motivated to live alone and in a home, should be "functionally autonomous" and receive a regular income or at least have the prospects of having such an income. This requirement might be a difficult selection filter). Access criteria went further to accept a weekly visit and to participate in the monitoring and assessment process. The purpose of the Housing First project was described as enabling the users to maintain their home and improving their quality of life. Recovery orientation, choice of the users regarding the social interventions

[10] A first evaluation with early results of this "Habitat programme" was published by Bernad et al (2016) in the European Journal of Homelessness. The project comprises Housing First tests in three cities (Madrid, Barcelona and Malaga) and started with an initial group of 28 users in 2014, incorporating 10 new users in 2015 and plans to reach at least 200 users by 2017.

[11] Some choice was also given to selection of the flats. At least 2 homes were to be offered to choose from.

(type, intensity and timing of support)[11], empowerment by professionals without directing the users, no time restrictions and harm reduction, all belonging to the basic principles of the Housing First approach were also listed as principles of the municipal pilot for testing Housing First in Barcelona.

Funding was made available for employing one professional for every 10 people plus a budget to allow 250 hours per week (for all 50 homes, i.e. 5 hours on average per week and home) of support work of "social integrators" or peer supporters to be used flexibly according to requirements. The contract was given in two "lots" to two different NGOs (the two pilots are now implemented by Saint John of God social services and by SUARA Cooperative/Garbet Foundation). The information provided for the Peer Review was not very clear concerning the way of working of the professionals, but obviously a case management approach was planned with very close cooperation between a "social team" (social work professionals, social "educators" and "integrators" and peers) and a "mental health team" (working with other homeless people as well and consisting of psychiatrists and nurses) further cooperating with the public health network and other social services.

External assessment was planned, comparing the experiences of the Housing First users with a comparison group of similar characteristics, with questionnaires at the start of the process and after 9 and 18 months. To assess the individual care process a measurement tool developed in the UK, the OUTCOME STAR, was planned to be used.[12]

Obviously it is too early to present any data from the municipal Housing First project. But from a power point presentation given in April 2016 the following basic data about the users may be reported. In addition to the programme group (50 users of the Housing First services), the comparison group comprises 70 persons continuing the use of standard services and there is also a reserve group of 19 people who may cover those who might abandon their flat. About 80 per cent of all users covered by the evaluation are men, 20 per cent are women, in the Housing First group the relation is 82/18 per cent. Average age of participants is 46.5 years; the bulk of participants is between 41 and 60 years old (72 % of Housing First users and 56.8 % of those in the comparison group. Of the Housing First group 24 per cent have a mental disorder, 48 per cent an addiction and 28 per cent a dual diagnosis. Among the control group mental disorders are slightly more frequent (29 %), and addiction (44 %) slightly less frequent, while the proportion of persons with a dual diagnosis is almost the same (26 %). 59 per cent of the people in the programme have spent between 3 and 19 years "sleeping in the streets", 14 per cent have been doing so even for 20 to 30 years, and 27 % for less than 2 years.

Self-assessment of fidelity to the core principles of the original Housing First model of Pathway to Housing in the US shows a high degree of overall fidelity (81 %). Fidelity was highest in the fields of service philosophy (98 %) and programme structure (87 %), lower in relation to separation of housing and services (83 %) and variety of services (76 %) and the lowest grade of fidelity was found in the field of choice of housing and structure (57 %). However, not all elements of the programme had been implemented when fidelity was measured.

It will be most interesting to see how the pilot will develop and what may be learned from it for

[12] For more information and a critical assessment of the strength and weaknesses of the OUTCOME STAR see Johnson and Pleace (2016)

the rest of the support system in Barcelona. Currently it is still constructed as part of a local system dominated by the staircase approach. Considerable obstacles have to be overcome: There is no social housing available, rents are high and private owners are reluctant to let to formerly homeless people. Furthermore the level of income and state benefits is generally very low. As with other pilots of Housing First it is a particular problem that the pilot itself is time-limited while it is a basic element of the philosophy of Housing First that services are available as long as they are needed. This is also stated as an element of the municipal programme in Barcelona, but it remains unclear how support will be secured if needed beyond 2018. As we know from many other examples in Europe, not all support processes will be intensive at the beginning, leading to a decrease of support needs over time, but for some participants rather intensive support will be needed over a longer period and for some the needs will develop in waves with rather intensive crisis intervention needed for some periods, but not for others. While it may be a valuable goal to connect users with regular municipal services, their level of attendance might not be sufficient to provide the support needed by the individuals.

All in all the introduction of a variety of Housing First pilots in Barcelona is encouraging, and as we now know from a whole range of Housing First pilots in European cities (see below) we may expect positive results, specifically on housing retention. Barcelona is currently the Spanish city with the largest number of Housing First units, but they are still a small part of provision for homeless people in the city and they are constructed as an additional part complementing the existing staircase. It will be interesting, to what extent a successful test of Housing First in Barcelona will help other Spanish cities to follow this example (given that the approach is also recommended in the National Strategy), but also how it might influence the way of thinking (and perhaps promote a mind shift) in other services for homeless people in Barcelona itself.

It is also interesting to note, that experts and representatives from NGO-services have already proposed to turn the current proportion of places in centres for temporary accommodation (78 per cent of accommodation offer in 2014) and in flats (22 per cent) step by step into a provision dominated by places in flats (60-70 per cent) and only a minority (30-40 per cent) in centres for temporary accommodation (see Uribe, 2015: 29) and to implement Housing First on a much broader scale with the explicit aim of reducing the overall number of homeless people in Barcelona.[13]

The given structural problems mentioned above will remain relevant challenges for any attempts to further scaling up the Housing First approach and develop a housing led strategy at local level. Obviously improving access to permanent housing for homeless people (and those imminently threatened with homelessness), securing the financial sustainability of tenancies for people who are long-term unemployed and have low chances to earn enough money to pay their rent, increasing the resources for floating support in housing (for those who need more than financial help in order to sustain a tenancy) and improving the prevention system as recommended by the National Strategy and in the 2013 XAPSLL report will all be necessary ele-

[13] Uribe also proposes to use multi-disciplinary teams including "peer experts" for providing support for a part of homeless people and a system of floating support for those with less severe problems. While he acknowledges the problem of securing a sufficient number of flats he points to emerging examples of NGO housing agencies aiming to make use of the private rented sector and of social housing for an exclusive use of (formerly) homeless people supported by NGO-services.

ments for a future reduction of homelessness in Barcelona. Instruments for measuring progress are given with the annual monitoring of the extent and profile of homelessness, which is to be praised as the most comprehensive monitoring system in a Spanish city.

5. The Barcelona Approach in Comparative Euro pean Perspective

5.1. Strategies against homelessness at all levels

With the recently approved national strategy on homelessness Spain has joined the quite considerable number of countries across Europe that have developed such national strategies. On FEANTSA`s website a range of national homelessness strategies of EU member states are documented (mostly) in English (http://www.feantsa.org/spip.php?article430&lang=en), e.g. for the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, and the UK. Portugal and Italy have also developed national homelessness strategies. Every year the European Journal of Homelessness publishes at least one review of a homelessness strategy. A review of the Spanish strategy will be published at the end of 2016 (Baptista, 2016). It is clear that the strategies vary considerably in content and ambition and not all of them have been implemented successfully. Rather few of them have had a dedicated element of providing additional housing for homeless people, perhaps one of the reasons, why the Finnish strategy is among those, which have been implemented with most success (see Pleace et al., 2015).

For local homelessness strategies previous Habitact Peer Reviews may be consulted. Gosme and Anderson (2015) provide an excellent overview on lessons to be learned from them. The Summer 2015 edition of Feantsa's magazine Homelessness in Europe provides further overviews and examples of national, regional and local homelessness strategies. Obviously it might be recommendable to develop a local homelessness strategy for Barcelona as well, with some realistic mid-term and longer-term goals. It would be particularly interesting to draw a closer comparison between Barcelona and cities like Vienna in Austria, both cities starting from a broad "chain of services" model towards testing the Housing First approach, which in Vienna is backed by a decision of the City Council to redirect homelessness services in this direction.

5.2. Continuous monitoring of the extent and profile of homelessness

It is obvious that existing attempts to provide recurrent national or regional data on homelessness also produce local data as a quasi by-product. This is the case with recurrent surveys as conducted in Finland, Denmark (bi-annual), Sweden (longer intervals) or the German region of North Rhine-Westphalia (annual statistics). The 3rd of February surveys in Hungary are another example of recurrent data collection on homelessness, although they are more focused on profile information than on measuring the extent of homelessness, given that they are conducted on a purely voluntary basis, mainly among NGOs (for all examples mentioned here, more information is available in Busch-Geertsema et al, 2014).

But first of all the number of national data collections on homelessness conducted every year is very limited in Europe, sometimes the level of profile information might be restricted and it

might in fact often be more feasible to implement more continuous and comprehensive data collections at a local level. The approach in Barcelona might be taken here as an example of good practice and there are a number of further cities in Spain conducting recurrent counts, although less frequent and sometimes with differing definitions. Rough sleeper counts may be found more often in the South of Europe (Lisbon, Madrid, Zaragoza, various Italian cities) than in many North European countries where rough sleepers are only a relatively small fraction of homeless people (also often due to a wider definition of homelessness). Exemptions are the frequent counts conducted in the context of various rough sleeper initiatives in the UK (ibid: 37), particularly in London, but there are also recurrent night counts in Brussels and Dublin, for example. Methodologies and definitions differ, some counts are only conducted for a few night hours, there are counts where rough sleepers are asked profile questions and others where they are not woken up and just a total number is aimed for.

The combination of data on rough sleepers and on those homeless people making use of a range of services for homeless people every year, as is practiced in Barcelona, can be taken as an example of good practice for other Cities as well. It could be further approved by some more targeted studies on specific subgroups, such as homeless women or young people and by longitudinal studies, as we know that point in time ("snapshot") data collections might lead to wrong assumptions about the dynamics of homelessness and the frequency of long-term homelessness in comparison to short term homelessness which might be more frequent than snap shots show and than is often acknowledged.

5.3. Implementing the Housing First approach in Europe

The European social experimentation project "*Housing First Europe*" (Busch-Geertsema, 2013), funded by the European Commission, confirmed positive results (housing retention rates of 80 to over 90 %) for a number of Housing First projects in very different local contexts in Europe (in Copenhagen, Glasgow, Lisbon and Amsterdam), as long as they broadly followed the basic principles of the Pathways to Housing approach developed in the US (Tsemberis, 2010 a and b). Furthermore, a large number of local evaluation reports of Housing First projects have been published and updated and the Housing First approach has been tested in a wide range of different national and local contexts across Europe. Apart from the local evaluation studies which were the basis of the Housing First Europe report[14] several evaluation studies were published more recently on a range of Housing First projects in England (Pleace and Bretherton 2013; Bretherton and Pleace 2015), on a Housing First programme in Dublin (Greenwood, 2015), a project in Vienna (neunerhaus, 2015) etc.

Evidence is also available from a large national pilot of Housing First ("*Un Chez Soi d'Abord*") in four French cities (Lille, Marseille, Paris, and Toulouse) with the most robust evaluation scheme in Europe, using a randomised controlled trial, (Estecahandy, 2015) and the Housing

[14] Wewerinke et al. (2013), Benjaminsen (2013), Johnsen with Fitzpatrick (2013), Ornelas (2013), and Fehér and Balogi (2013). Note that the final evaluation report of the Glasgow project was published separately and later (Johnsen, 2013).

First programme implemented by RAIS in Spain, which was already mentioned above (Bernad *et al*, 2016). In 2016 first results of the national "Housing First Belgium", implemented between 2013 and 2016 in the five largest Belgian cities (Antwerp, Brussels, Charleroi, Ghent, and Liege and from 2015 also in three additional middle sized cities (Hasselt, Genk and Sint-Truiden) were presented and discussed in a European Peer Review (Busch-Geertsema 2016a and b).

All evaluations report very high housing retention rates. In France housing retention after one year was over 86 %, in Spain 100 % after 6 months, in Vienna 98 % after 3 years, Dublin used another measure and found that after 12 months Housing First participants had spent over 67 % of their time in stable housing, compared to only 5 % for a comparison group. There is a range of further European countries, where Housing First is tested at the time of writing, including Italy, Norway, Poland, and Sweden.

Only two European countries, Finland and Denmark, have gone beyond testing the Housing First approach in a few projects and have based national strategies for homelessness on the principles and the philosophy of Housing First. In Finland the national strategy aimed (rather ambitiously) at eliminating long-term homelessness by 2015.[15] This aim was not fully reached, but long-term homelessness has been reduced considerably and – as mentioned above – Finland is one of the very few European countries reporting a decrease of overall homeless numbers in the years preceding 2015. Denmark has used Housing First on a large scale in the Danish National Homelessness Strategy from 2009 – 2013 and more than 1,000 homeless people have been rehoused in Housing First projects under this strategy.[16] Recently there were further statements in favour of national or regional homelessness policies following the Housing First principles, e.g. in the Netherlands and – as mentioned above – in Spain.

The world's largest and most robust national test of Housing First was conducted in Canada, called At Home/Chez Soi with a budget of about 75 million EUR ($110 million CAD). Housing First was tested in five Canadian cities (Moncton, Montréal, Toronto, Vancouver, and Winnipeg), involving more than 2,000 homeless mentally ill participants for two years in a randomised controlled trial (1,158 in Housing First, 990 in treatment as usual). Similarly as in Dublin, housing retention was calculated in percentage of time spent in stable housing. Over the two years of the study, participants in Housing First spent an average of 73 % of their time in stable housing compared with only 32 % of those in treatment as usual. During the last half year 62 % of Housing First participants were housed all of the time and 22 % some of the time whereas only 31 % of the control group were housed all of the time and 23 % some of the time.[17]

A recent literature review in the European Journal of Homelessness lists 184 publications about Housing First between 1990 and 2014 (Raitakari and Juhila, 2015). Meanwhile a substantial number of additional publications have been added, especially with the results of the Cana-

[15] See Busch-Geertsema (2011), and Pleace et al. (2015).

[16] See Benjaminsen (2014), and Fitzpatrick (2013 a and b).

[17] Goering et al (2014: 17); on the results of the Canadian programme see also Aubry et al (2015).

dian programme being published widely.

FEANTSA has very recently published a Housing First Guide with an overview of existing approaches in Europe and guidance for the implementation of Housing First services across Europe (see www.housingfirstguide.eu)

In Central and Eastern European countries the approach is less widespread than in the countries mentioned above. However, for the rest of Europe we cannot speak of the Housing First approach as a dominant approach which has already replaced the more traditional staircase system and the still widespread requirement that homeless people have first to be made housing-ready before they can regain access to regular permanent housing. These more traditional approaches are still a dominating and widespread answer to homelessness in many European cities and countries and one of the most important reasons for their persistence is the massive problem vulnerable groups have in gaining access to regular housing. In most countries this is a problem of a general lack of sufficient affordable housing, but homeless people are also confronted with other barriers blocking their access to housing (see Edgar et al. 2002 and Pleace et al. 2011).

A number of themes are debated with regard to the Housing First approach in Europe and elsewhere. To mention just a few of them:[18]

- Should Housing First be reserved for a small group of homeless people with particular severe and high needs, or are the Housing First principles transferrable and should lead to a mind shift in all services for homeless people?
- How much fidelity is needed in following the original model of Housing First developed by Pathways to Housing in New York and to what extent should diversions from the original model be accepted?
- What type of housing is best suited for implementing the Housing First approach and what role should congregated housing with support on site play?
- Which degree of social integration of long-term homeless people may be expected realistically under the given structural conditions by implementing the Housing First approach?
- What role should financial arguments play when arguing for the Housing First approach?

[18] See also Busch-Geertsema (2016 a and b)

6. Transferability issues

Barcelona obviously has a well-functioning network of service providers for homeless people including NGOs and municipal services, which is a basic condition for running the data collection system in the way as it is done currently. Municipal services provide their data together with the accommodation-based NGO services, which is an important basis for comprehensive data collection. Given the willingness of all organisations to provide data at a certain date and given the reliability and validity of registers of all organisations participating, the approach to merge all the data at city level into one big data base should be transferable. Of course it is essential in this respect that people are not registered at several services on the same day and double counting is avoided. This should not be too complicated at local level and given that one fixed date is taken as the day of the count. A consistent data collection will of course need resources (personnel) for collecting the data and testing their reliability and for writing up the results, but in general the approach used in Barcelona seems transferrable to other cities, if the conditions mentioned are met and if cooperation of all relevant service providers is achieved.

Conducting street counts with the aim of full coverage of all people sleeping in the streets is quite a challenging task, involving extensive preparation of a large number of volunteers, expert knowledge on typical rough sleeper spots, the cooperation of social services as well as the police, and rather strict coordination. However there are several examples in a whole range of European cities showing the feasibility of such an approach. In the US extensive handbooks about so called PIT (Point in Time) Counts have been published[19] and more and more digital support (like an App, also used in Barcelona in the last street count) is used to facilitate the counts.

Implementing the Housing First approach in local pilot projects or on a larger scale is obviously possible, as we can see from the increasing number of examples in Europe mentioned above. It will always be necessary to adjust the approach to local conditions without ignoring the fundamental principles of the Housing First approach. Often a fundamental mind shift is needed and social work conditions are fundamentally different from those in the traditional homeless services. The recently published European Housing First Guide (www.housingfirstguide.eu) may be used as a helpful tool to ensure and facilitate the transferability of this approach to local circumstances.

[19] See http://www.endhomelessness.org/blog/c/point-in-time-counts

7. Questions for peer review

The peer review might be used for an exchange of experiences with local Housing First pilots. It might be useful to come back to the themes for debate mentioned earlier and to the following questions:

- What are the specific challenges when implementing Housing First pilots?
- How can access to housing be organised? Which instruments can be used to overcome existing barriers in the housing market for homeless people? Can the private rented market be used in a better way if not enough social housing is available? Are social rental agencies a useful strategy?
- Is a mind shift needed at the level of support workers but also in public perception and how can this be achieved?
- How to deal with the dilemma that pilots are time-limited and support for Housing First users should be available as long as it is needed?
- How to reconcile the focus on those most excluded from the existing service system on the one hand and the requirement that people should have prospects to achieve a sufficient income in order to cover their housing costs in the long term?
- What needs to be done in order to mainstream the Housing First approach on the local level and what are the main barriers?

Another point for discussion might be preventive strategies. More information could be provided about existing strategies to prevent homelessness from occurring in Barcelona (given that the proportion of rented housing is higher than elsewhere in Spain, it would be interesting to know how rent arrears might be tackled, but also homelessness occurring after release from institutions or after the loss of owner occupied housing and how the prevention field could be integrated into the monitoring system). All participants could contribute by answering the following questions:

- How can preventive work at city level be made effective and lead to a reduction of homelessness?
- How can agencies develop realistic objectives and indicators to measure progress of homelessness prevention and reduction?

Last but not least the approach to monitoring annually the extent and profile of homelessness could be discussed:

- What are the challenges and the potentials of an annual count at municipal level?
- What do participants think about the selection of ETHOS subgroups in the annual counts of Barcelona?
- Are the profile data sufficient and if not what other dimensions would be relevant (e.g.

length of homelessness)?

- What resources are necessary to run such a continuous monitoring system of homelessness at city level and would a street count be necessary more frequently?

8. Conclusion

A highly differentiated system of service provision is available for homeless people in Barcelona, with thousands of places in accommodation-based services and services for basic needs such as food and hygiene, run by NGOs and the municipality and working together in a network of services for homeless people. Street work and psychiatric support for people living on the street is also available. Barcelona has an outstanding system of systematically monitoring the extent and profile of homelessness in the city every year, with a broad and solid definition of homelessness and a transferable methodology that includes all accommodation services available for homeless people in the city, but also rough sleepers and those living under very extreme housing conditions. At national level Barcelona probably has the most comprehensive recurrent data collection system of homelessness in Spain, which allows for close monitoring of the developments over time. Furthermore results are open for public debate and in regular reports the data are embedded in wider reflections on the quality of existing provision for homeless people and the need for changes.

Barcelona is also an interesting example for a European Peer Review on service provision for homeless people, as the City was for a long time dominated by a staircase system which expected people to move through a chain of different accommodation services allowing for short, medium and longer stays in order to be finally integrated into permanent housing without further support. More recently increasing focus has been laid on more personalised support and on introducing the Housing First approach in several pilots and on a quantitative level which is unique so far for any Spanish City. It will be of interest to see to what extent the Housing First pilots may foster further changes in homelessness provision and how the challenging task to implement this approach under difficult structural conditions will be managed.

The city is well suited for a European Peer Review and an exchange with other European Cities dealing with similar challenges of modernising their support system and monitoring the extent and profile of homelessness at city level.

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Annex 1: ETHOS – European Typology of Homelessness

Conceptual Category		Operational Category		Living Situation		Generic Definition
ROOFLESS	1	People Living Rough	1.1	Public space or external space		Living in the streets or public spaces, without a shelter that can be defined as living quarters
	2	People in emergency accommodation	2.1	Night shelter		People with no usual place of residence who make use of overnight shelter, low threshold shelter
HOUSELESS	3	People in accommodation for the homeless	3.1	Homeless hostel		Where the period of stay is intended to be short term
			3.2	Temporary Accommodation		
			3.3	Transitional supported accommodation		
	4	People in Women's Shelter	4.1	Women's shelter accommodation		Women accommodated due to experience of domestic violence and where the period of stay is intended to be short term
	5	People in accommodation for immigrants	5.1	Temporary accommodation / reception centres		Immigrants in reception or short term accommodation due to their immigrant status
			5.2	Migrant workers accommodation		
	6	People due to be released from institutions	6.1	Penal institutions		No housing available prior to release
			6.2	Medical institutions (*)		Stay longer than needed due to lack of housing
			6.3	Children's institutions / homes		No housing identified (e.g by 18th birthday)
	7	People receiving longer-term support (due to homelessness)	7.1	Residential care for older homeless people		Long stay accommodation with care for formerly homeless people (normally more than one year)
			7.2	Supported accommodation for formerly homeless people		
INSECURE	8	People living in insecure accommodation	8.1	Temporarily with family/friends		Living in conventional housing but not the usual or place of residence due to lack of housing
			8.2	No legal (sub)tenancy		Occupation of dwelling with no legal tenancy illegal occupation of a dwelling
			8.3	Illegal occupation of land		Occupation of land with no legal rights
	9	People living under threat of eviction	9.1	Legal orders enforced (rented)		Where orders for eviction are operative
			9.2	Re-possession orders (owned)		Where mortagee has legal order to re-possess
	10	People living under threat of violence	10.1	Police recorded incidents		Where police action is taken to ensure place of safety for victims of domestic violence
INADEQUATE	11	People living in temporary / non-conventional structures	11.1	Mobile homes		Not intended as place of usual residence
			11.2	Non-conventional building		Makeshift shelter, shack or shanty
			11.3	Temporary structure		Semi-permanent structure hut or cabin
	12	People living in unfit housing	12.1	Occupied dwellings unfit for habitation		Defined as unfit for habitation by national legislation or building regulations
	13	People living in extreme overcrowding	13.1	Highest national norm of overcrowding		Defined as exceeding national density standard for floor-space or useable rooms

Note: Short stay is defined as normally less than one year; Long stay is defined as more than one year.
This definition is compatible with Census definitions as recommended by the UNECE/EUROSTAT report (2006)

(*) Includes drug rehabilitation institutions, psychiatric hospitals etc.

Notes

Notes

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